

# The Four and More model

A tool for systematically exploring behavior in complex organizations

The Four and More Model helps make sense of organizational behavior by exploring immediate triggers (Mechanism), developmental patterns (Development), present purposes (Function), and historical origins (Evolution) across multiple timescales. By testing hypotheses across these dimensions in parallel, teams gain a richer understanding of why behaviors persist and where to intervene for change.

1

## Clarify your Context

Pin down **where**, **when** and **with whom** the behavior happens before interpreting it

2

## Generate Hypotheses

Use Tinbergen's Four Questions with Sapolsky's Timescales to develop multiple possible explanations.

### What triggers the behavior right now? (Mechanism)

Neural responses and stress reactions occur within **seconds** to **minutes**, while fatigue, circadian rhythms, and recent interactions influence behavior over **hours**.

### How did the behavior arise? (Development)

Daily sprint cycles and feedback create habits over **days** and **weeks**. Team norms and leadership changes solidify patterns over **months**. Professional backgrounds and organizational history establish deeper foundations over **years**.

### What purpose does the behavior serve? (Function)

Immediate needs like avoiding conflict or meeting deadlines drive behavior within **hours and days**. Over **weeks and months**, maintaining trust and team cohesion becomes central. Long-term stability, reputation, and cultural alignment provide enduring value over **years**.

### What deeper history shaped this behavior? (Evolution)

Organizational norms and "how we've always done it" operate over **years**. Industry traditions and cultural scripts spanning **generations** continue shaping behavior through evolutionary pressures like group belonging and conflict avoidance.

3

## Set The Aim

Direction of Travel

*More of ..... and less of .....*

4

## Safe to Fail Experiments

Design small probes to test your hypotheses and move towards your aim. Describe your experiments and why it is safe

5

## Review and Iterate

What happened? What did we learn? What's next?

